

Dynamic Relationship between the Use of Social Media & the Consolidation of Positive Communal Values among University Students

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the type of interrelationship between the utilization of social media and the various processes of reinforcing positive communal values among students. For the purpose in question, and through the use of an electronic questionnaire, a random sample of 305 university students in the Emirate of Sharjah, and within what we may call the "Probability Samples" has been selected.

The study has concluded that there is a high positive correlation between the use of social media and the indicators for achieving high rates of social values among university students. Besides, the current study has also confirmed the intensity of using social media by university students in the Emirate of Sharjah.

Keywords: social media, positive social values, virtual social capital

Introduction

The use of social media has recently witnessed a worldwide spread among people and to the extent that it has been described by sociologists as the "Third Habitat", considering "home" as the first man's location, and "Place of Work or Schooling" is the second.

During the last three decades, social media has created some kind of a revolutionary breakthrough, transferring all types of electronic communication to unprecedented horizons, and such offering its users great opportunities for influence, crossing borders with almost no restrictions at all. These networks are no longer just means for building friendships, acquaintances and entertainment. Indeed, social media has transformed into an essential tool that leads to achieving social changes. We may also consider it as an important institution, which plays an effective role in education and change of behavior, mobilizing, directing and controlling millions of individuals everywhere in the world.

Electronic journalism as an image of social media has democratized the means of communication. In

other words, it has liberated the use of media from all types of control and pressure that could be imposed by publishers, managers and those who are in positions of responsibility. Accordingly, any user of media nowadays can freely express himself and talk about his opinions with no fear at all of negative consequences that may result from such actions.

Many studies have referred to the positive effect of social media on the processes of promoting social values. Al-Shmeiri (2020), for example, has found out that there is a statistically significant relation between the average use of social media via Facebook by a group of Saudi young people as a study sample and their attitudes towards the exhibited contents and their conflict with the existing social and behavioral values. It has also been noticed that there is a statistically significant relation between the motives that lie behind using Facebook and their attitudes towards the influence of exhibited contents on the values and behaviors already existing in society.

Another study (Al-Sleihat, 2018) has showed a distinguished role for the social networks in

developing social responsibilities, and therefore, the researcher has confirmed in his recommendations on educating university students to use social media appropriately and in a way that could be more useful.

Another researcher (Al-Azimi, 2017) refers to social responsibility towards the group, confirming that the percentage of contribution in voluntary group works presented through social media has distinctively increased. These activities indeed reflect the degree of commitment and pertinence of those volunteers towards their families and community. It has also been noticed that group work activities have escalated interaction between the users of these websites.

Shirin Kadwani (2018) concludes that Facebook has managed to a great extent in creating a network of social relations among its members through constant processes of support and reinforcement. These conclusions go in line with another study (Abu Douh, 2017), which posits that social media websites have played an outstanding role in promoting the real and virtual social capital among the Saudi female students, as a study sample. Meanwhile, these websites have expanded their social relations.

Valenzuela (2009) has also tested the relationship between using Facebook and reinforcement of positive social values among a sample of university students in Texas. She has concluded that there is a positive connection between using Facebook on one side, and satisfaction about life activities with social confidence on the other.

As for pre-university education, Trainor (2010) believes that using social capital by parents, interacting and building relations with school individuals shall enable them to obtain information about the school. Such facility was not available before the use of social capital. Huang (2009), on the other hand, has noticed that there is a positive relation between the number of education years and social capital. This could be attributed to the fact that the individuals who have good relations with parents and friends from childhood stage could obtain better education at the age of adulthood.

However, achievement of positive social values due to the utilization of social media is a

phenomenon that is different from one society to another, and this is often traced to the differences in the social and cultural backgrounds, the mechanisms of interaction between its members, the demographics and the prevailing social values. Progress in technology and its availability to most individuals of society is another essential factor.

It is remarkable to note that the United Arab Emirates, as per the indicators of modern development, is occupying an advanced ranking in the list of countries that use social media. Despite this fact, it is considered as one of the unique societies in its demographics, which is constituted of more than 200 nationalities. In such multi-national community, reinforcement of positive social values, such as tolerance, cooperation, social participation and other values becomes a priority and a social responsibility.

Thus, our attempt in the current research is to investigate the relation between the use of social media and the various processes of promoting social values among university students in the Emirate of Sharjah. Such unique effort is really considered as essential and very important.

Methodology

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of this study, finding answers to its questions and selecting the required hypotheses, the researcher has adopted a survey approach, being a well-organized and scientific task for collecting data about the related phenomenon. Through the utilization of this approach, which we believe to be the most plausible method for our study, we shall be able to test variables as well as hypotheses, and determine the type of relation between the use of social media and the reinforcement of positive communal values. A specific questionnaire has been designed for this purpose.

Objectives

Three main objectives for the current study can be summarized and as follows:

1. To determine the degree of impact of using social media by university students in promoting and reinforcing positive communal values in the Emirati Society, such as cooperation, tolerance, loyalty and belonging to the Homeland,

sense of satisfaction, confidence and the various means of serving the community.

2. To identify motives that lie behind using the social media by university students and how to satisfy them.

3. To come up with conclusions and recommendations that could contribute in reinforcing positive communal values and social responsibilities among Arab young people.

Importance of the Study

Importance of this study is attributed to a number of factors. They are as follows:

1. Figures and statistics indicate that the rate of using social media in the UAE, the focus of this study, has increased dramatically in recent years.

2. Previous studies as well as concrete evidence that social media could activate people's energies, specifically among the youth group, and direct them towards building and innovating within the frame of promoting old values and behaviors and replacing them with new ones.

3. Social media has become a main source for collecting news and information that could affect people's opinions and beliefs.

4. Educators and those who are specialized in the field of education could make use of this study in designing curricula and educational strategies.

Hypotheses

We suggest two main hypotheses for our current study. They are as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant correlation between the degree of positive communal values among university students in the Emirate of Sharjah, and their use of social media sites. These values, as stated above, include cooperation, tolerance, belonging, loyalty, sense of satisfaction and confidence.

2. There is a statistically significant correlation between the use of social media and the variables of age, gender, scientific specialization, and the stage of study.

Theory of Virtual Social Capital

This theory assumes that the social capital on a hypothetical level is based on a network of connections between virtually interacting individuals through the social media sites. This virtual area is often affected by the interactions of the internet, which constitute the communication mechanism that leads in turn to achieving the virtual social capital. We may characterize this social capital, being virtual of course, with two main features: exchange of information and social support. While the first focuses on solving technical and social problems, the second is related to the support that an individual could obtain from the network of relations and interactions he has in the virtual society (Bukhari & Zaki, 2020).

The power of the virtual social capital is based on the network of relations that are achieved inside the internet, and specifically, the social networking sites. One, however, can make use of these relations to achieve mutual benefits among members of similar interests. It is remarkable to note that interactions of a virtual society, i. e. the social networking sites, is not confined to specific time, and this indeed gives some kind of privilege to such type of interactions (IBID).

Interrelationships as well as common interests on the social media sites are factors that contribute in the establishment of virtual social capital, which in consequence could lead to achieving benefits to individuals and groups.

We could measure the virtual social capital through a number of indicators (Kadwani, 2018), such as membership, joining social networks, and its members shall be devoted to standards of cooperation, consistency, love of others as well as being motivated for team work. The virtual social capital is also measured through the number of groups or participants who are in general active communicators and the degree of cohesion inside these groups. The current study has adopted a value system to be used as an indicator for achieving the positive social values (already stated above) among the members of our study community.

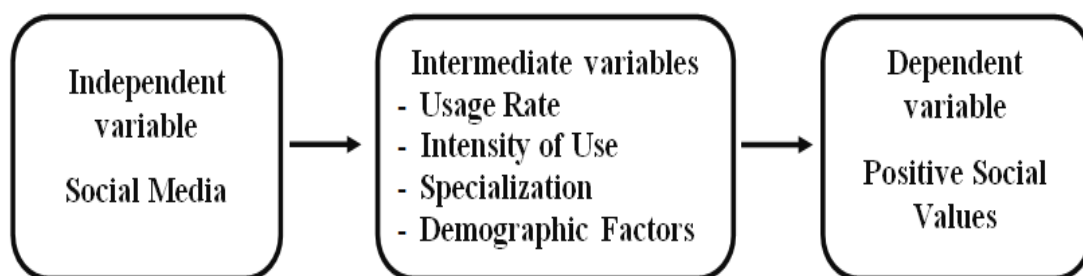


Figure 1: Study Variables

Study Community / Population

Our study community / population includes all students at the University of Sharjah, Al-Qasimia University and the American University of Sharjah during the Academic Year 2019 -2020.

Study Sample

The researcher has carried out a field study on a random sample with the framework of “Probability Samples”. The sample consists of 305 students selected from the universities in the Emirate of Sharjah including the University of Sharjah, Al-Qasimia University and the American

University of Sharjah. It has been taken into consideration, when selecting the study sample, the type of university whether Governmental or Private, the nature of study and specialization, covering both practical and theoretical colleges as well as other demographic variables with the aim of achieving diversity among the subjects of the study. Table No. 01 shows the distribution of our sample members as per the demographic variables.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Members as per Demographic Variables

#	Features	Frequencies	Percentage
1.	Age:		
	17 -20	172	56.40%
	21 – 24	121	39.70%
	25 – 30	06	02.00%
	More than 30	06	02.00%
2.	Gender:		
	Male	244	80.00%
	Female	61	20.00%
3.	Educational Level:		
	Bachelor	292	95.70%
	Postgraduate	13	04.30%
4.	Specialization:		
	Islamic & Sharia	84	27.50%
	Medical Sciences	30	09.80%
	Engineering & Administrative Sciences	68	22.30%
	Social & Humanitarian	123	40.30%
5.	University:		
	University of Sharjah	121	39.67%
	Qasimia University	156	51.14%
	American University of Sharjah	28	09.18%

Total	305	100%
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Procedures of the Study

The researcher has developed an electronic questionnaire through the use of Google files, and then sending it to students electronically by using the Electronic System of each related University. The selected students for our study have answered the questionnaire and sent it back electronically, too.

The Questionnaire as a Study Instrument

After reviewing the related literature and studies, and as stated above, a questionnaire has been developed by the researcher to measure the relationship between the use of social media and the promotion of communal values among university students. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first covers the personal information of the subjects of the study, including name, age, gender, specialization, stage of the study, and the name of the university in which he/she is studying.

The second part of the questionnaire incorporates a set of questions, which intend to explore and identify the role that social media plays in strengthening positive social values among university students. These questions include seven indicators: first indicator: rate of using social media; second indicator: impact of using social media in the reinforcement of societal participation; third indicator: role of social media in achieving the value of tolerance; fourth indicator: role of social media in promoting the concept of cooperation; fifth indicator: role of social media in implanting the values of loyalty and belonging to the Nation; sixth indicator: role of social media in increasing confidence in other people; seventh indicator: the relation between social media and sense of satisfaction as well as self-promotion. Likert scale has been used to measure the subjects' responses to the questionnaire's statements and as shown in Table 02.

Table 2: Likert Scale

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Degree	1	2	3	4	5

To determine the degree of impact of each paragraph included in the questionnaire, we have adopted Likert scale according to which the range is identified as $5 - 1 = 4$. The result is divided by

Likert scale degrees, that is 5. Accordingly, 4 divided by 5 is 0.8 , and such, we calculate the effect of each paragraph. Table 3 shows the "probable mean value" and the "approval score".

Table 3: Probable Mean Value " & Approval Score

Probable Mean Value	Approval Score
From 1 to less than 1.8	Very Weak
From 1.8 to less than 2.6	Weak
From 2.6 to less than 3.4	Average
From 3.4 to less than 4.2	High
From 4.2 to 5	Very High

Instrument Verification

For the purpose of verifying the questionnaire as a survey instrument, the researcher has distributed it on a group of Academics to take their opinions about its content. Their comments and suggestions have been taken into consideration, and the

questionnaire has been modified and developed accordingly. The questionnaire has also been given to 10 students to ensure the clarity of its questions and expressions, and also to determine the time required to answer the questionnaire.

Statistical Processing

The researcher has used the “Statistical Package for Social Sciences” (SPSS), selecting the “Descriptive Statistics”. “Simple Moving Average” (SMA), “Standard Deviation”, “Frequencies”, “Pearson Correlation Coefficient”, “Reliability Coefficient” (A), “Correlation Coefficient” (R), “Determination Coefficient”(2R), “Significance Level” (Sig), and “K.S. Test”.

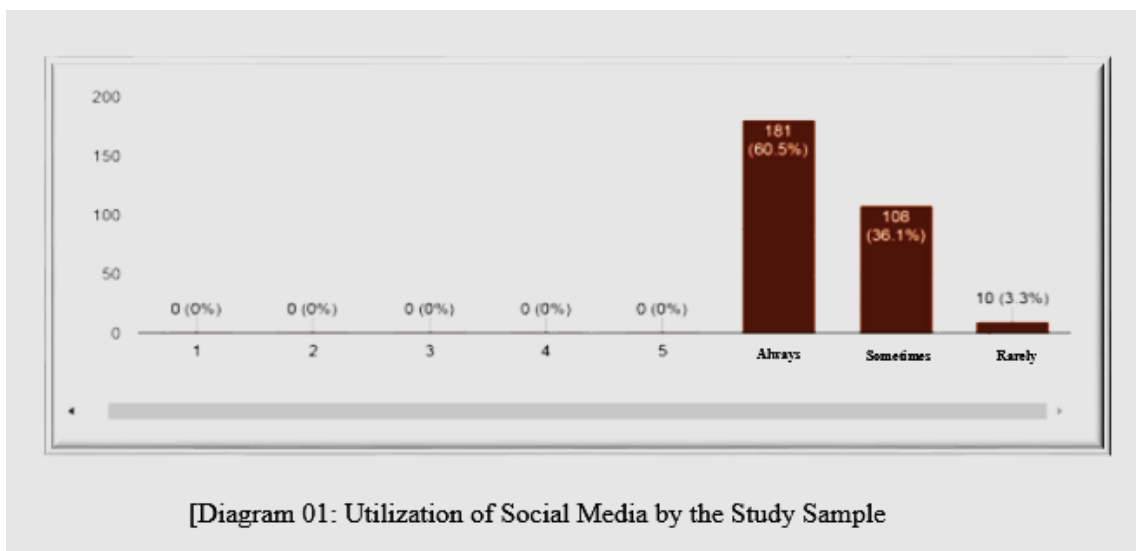
Study Conclusions

These conclusions can be summarized as follows:

1. Use of Social Media

Diagram 01 provides us with the following data, as collected from the questionnaire:

- The university students who always use social media come first with a percentage of 60.50
- The university students who sometimes use social media come second with a percentage of 36.10
- The university students who rarely use social media come third with a percentage of 03.3



The results stated above, as per diagram 01, confirm the fact that the majority of university students, according to our study sample, use social media, whereas just a minority of the sample almost do not use it.

- Instagram comes first with 64.6%
- Facebook comes second with 45.2%
- Snapchat and Twitter come third with 30.5% for each
- LinkedIn comes fourth with 7.2%
- Myspace comes fifth with 2.6%

2. Social Networking Sites used by the Study Sample

Diagram 02 gives us details about the Social Networking Sites used by the study sample and as follows:

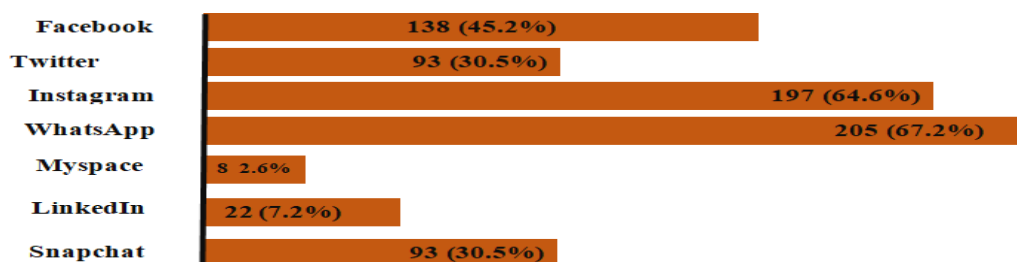


Diagram 2: Social Networking Sites use by university Students

3. Frequency of Using Social Media

Diagram 03 shows the intensity / frequency of using social media by university students, our study sample. The data given are as follows: 86.8% for daily use; 8.9% for three times use per week; 2.6% for two times use per week; and 1.7% for one

time use per week. Those results confirm the fact that the majority of university students use social networking sites almost every day. In other words, social media has become an essential part of the daily life of the youth.

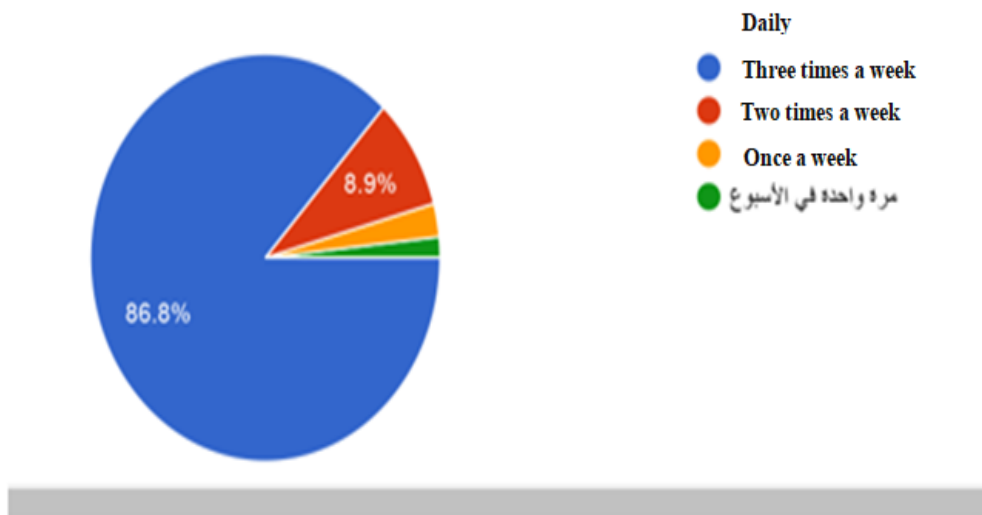


Diagram 3: Intensity of Using Social Media

Motives of Using Social Media

Diagram 04 deals with the motives that lie behind using social media by university students. The results have come as follows:

- To know the news of the local community comes first with 69.8%

- For entertainment and chatting with friends comes second with 54%
- To know the news of university and academic courses comes third with 41.3%
- To make use of others' experiences comes fourth with 37.4%
- To participate in discussions and exchange views on various issues comes fifth with 33.2%

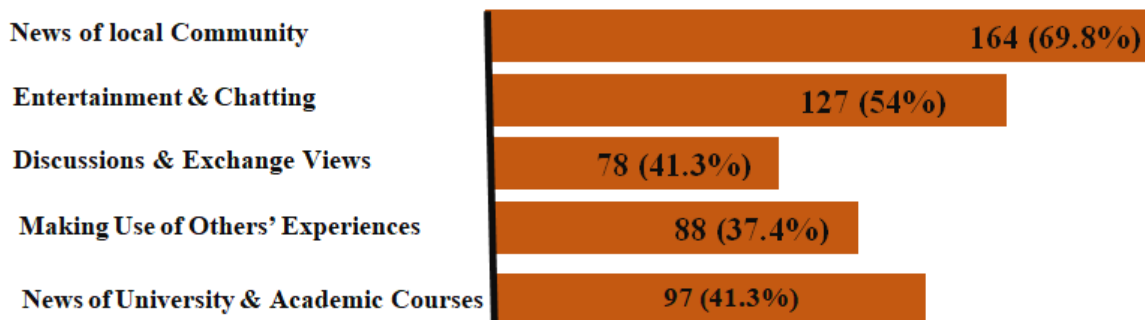


Diagram 4: Motives of Using Social Media by University Students

These results go in line with the results of another study (Abdul Mu'ti, 2013), which has targeted the

attitudes of Egyptian young people towards social networking sites, and similarly, seeking news has

come as first motive. Our results have also agreed with the results of two other studies (Kamal, 2013 & Ellison, 2007), confirming that communication with friends and social interaction with others comes as a first motive in using Facebook.

Table 4: Relationship between use of social media & and promotion of positive social values

#	Variables: Social Media	S.M.A.	S.D.	A.D.	R.S.
1	Communal participation	4.03	0.69	High	79.48
2	Values of Tolerance	4.24	0.75	V. High	85.64
3	Cooperation with Others	4.23	0.76	V. High	87.69
4	Loyalty & Belonging to Nation	4.19	0.76	High	83.79
5	Increase of Trust & Confidence	4.09	0.79	High	81.45
6	Satisfaction & Self-Promotion	4.10	0.88	High	82.56
Final Evaluation: Effect of Social Media on Promoting Positive Communal Values				High	83.43

S.M.A. = Simple Moving Average; S.D. = Standard Deviation; A.D. = Approval Degree; R.S. = Relative Significance

The data provided in table 04 confirm that Social Media plays an essential role on promoting positive social values among university students in the Emirate of Sharjah. Approval Degree of the sample has reached 83.43%, whereas the SMA ranges between 4.3 and 4.24, which all have obtained an Approval Degree of High or Very High. Moreover, the Relative Significance of the variables has registered a percentage ranging between 79.48% and 87.69%. the former

percentage refers to the role of social media in promoting communal participation among the individuals of the study sample. The latter percentage however refers to the influence of social networking sites on reinforcing cooperation with others. We may conclude therefore that the internet environment in general and social media mainly depend on interaction and participation among the individuals of virtual community leading finally to achieving cooperation with others.

The second percentage of (85.64%), is related to values of tolerance, and such very high percentage could be attributed to the UAE State concern about reinforcing the culture and values of tolerance theoretically as well as practically. In addition, the UAE Government has designated 2019 as a Tolerance Year. The fourth indicator, which focuses on loyalty and belonging to nation has achieved 83.79%. Such high percentage might reinforce these values through social media, and they are clearly reflected in times of crises or when victory is achieved in competitions of various fields. The other two indicators have also achieved high percentages reflecting the role of social media in promoting the social values in question, i.e. supporting satisfaction and confidence.

The first indicator which is related to supporting communal participation among young people has achieved the least percentage, and this could be interpreted within the claim that dealing with social media in a virtual environment might affect negatively on participation in actual reality. Many university students indeed confine their participation to virtual reality which shall certainly have negative impact on their real life activities.

Table 05 shows the normal distribution of the study variables data as per the responses of the research sample to the various parts of the questionnaire. Those responses have statistical significance ranging between (0.000%) and (0.015%), and those are much less than the significance determined by the researcher (0.05%), which indicates the effect of social media in reinforcing positive communal values among university students.

Table 5: K.S. Test Value & Significance Level of the Study Variables

#	Study Variables: Social Media &	K.S. Test	S.L.
1.	Communal participation	0.138	0.000
2.	Values of Tolerance	0.145	0.002
3.	Cooperation with Others	0.105	0.001
4.	Loyalty & Belonging to Nation	0.114	0.010
5.	Increase of Trust & Confidence	0.108	0.015
6.	Satisfaction & Self-Promotion	0.119	0.001

S.L. = Significance Level

Table 06 provides us with details about the correlation coefficient between the use of social media by university students, being our study sample, and the research variables. It has been noticed that the reliability coefficient ranges between 0.524 and 0.617; the regression coefficient between 0.51 and 0.62; the correlation coefficient between 0.631 and 0.712; whereas the coefficient of determination varies between 0.32 and 0.44. All of them have a statistical significance ranging between 0.000 and 0.012 and they are all below the one determined by the researcher, and that is 0.05, and such confirming the fact that there is a statistically significant relation between

using social media (by the university students as a study sample) and reinforcement of positive communal values. In other words, we may claim that there is a positive relationship between the utilization of social media by university students and

1. communal participation;
2. values of tolerance;
3. cooperation with others;
4. loyalty and belonging to Nation;
5. increase of confidence and trust;
6. satisfaction and self-promotion

Table 6: Correlation Coefficient between the Use of Social Media & Research Variables

	Research Variables	S.C.	R.C.	C.C.	C.D.	S.L.
		A	B	R	2R	Sig
1.	Reinforcing communal participation	0.524	0.62	0.647	0.32	0.001
2.	Achieving values of tolerance	0.586	0.52	0.628	0.42	0.002
3.	Achieving cooperation with others	0.579	0.48	0.631	0.37	0.000
4.	Inaugurating loyalty and belonging to Nation	0.612	0.55	0.664	0.30	0.012
5.	Increase of confidence and trust	0.617	0.51	0.656	0.35	0.001
6.	Increase of satisfaction and self-promotion	0.599	0.60	0.712	0.44	0.002

S.C. = Stability Coefficient; R.C. = Regression Coefficient; C.C. = Correlation Coefficient; C.D. = Coefficient of Determination;
S.L. = Significance Level

Table 07 shows the Correlation Coefficient between the use of Social Media by university students, the research sample, and the "Demographic Variables" of the research, and it has been noticed that they all have statistical significance ranging between 0.001% and 0.020%,

which is below the level determined by the researcher, and that is 0.05%. this indeed indicates that there are statistically significant differences between the use of social networking sites by the sample study and the demographic variables and as follows:

- There is a positive correlation between using social media by university students, our study sample, and the age variable as the correlation coefficient ranges between 0.610 and 0.661, and the age

- stage of (17 -20) has come first with a correlation coefficient of 0.660.
- There is a positive correlation between using social media by university students, our study sample, and the gender variable (male / female) as the correlation coefficient ranges between 0.608 and 0.687, and the male category has come first with a correlation coefficient of 0.687.
- There is a positive correlation between using social media by university students, our study sample, and the study stage variable (Bachelor, Master, Ph.D.) as the correlation coefficient ranges between 0.609 and 0.661, and the Bachelor Stage Category has come first with a correlation coefficient of 0.661.
- There is a positive correlation between using social media by university students, our study sample, and the university variable (Qasimia, American, Sharjah) as the correlation coefficient ranges between 0.661 and 0.672, and Qasimia University has come first with a correlation coefficient of 0.672.
- There is a positive correlation between using social media by university students, our study sample, and the specialization variable (Qasimia, American, Sharjah) as the correlation coefficient ranges between 0.631 and 0.668, and the Medical Sciences have come first with a correlation coefficient of 0.668.

Table 7: Correlation Coefficient between the Use of Social Media & Demographic Variables

University Students often use Citizen Journalism	S.C.	R.C.	C.C.	C.D.	S.L.
Research Variables	A	B	R	2R	Sig
Age:					
17 – 20	0.512	0.50	0.661	0.341	0.002
21 – 24	0.456	0.59	0.624	0.351	0.001
25 – 30	0.485	0.49	0.630	0.335	0.012
More than 30	0.501	0.55	0.610	0.333	0.013
Gender:					
Male	0.569	0.53	0.687	0.361	0.006
Female	0.519	0.57	0.608	0.342	0.004
Study Stage:					
Bachelor	0.554	0.61	0.661	0.348	0.020
Master	0.507	0.53	0.631	0.326	0.008
Ph.D.	0.528	0.57	0.609	0.319	0.018
University:					
American of Sharjah	0.621	0.52	0.669	0.350	0.001
Sharjah	0.562	0.58	0.661	0.338	0.016
Qasimia	0.580	0.61	0.672	0.316	0.002
Specialization:					
Islamic Studies & Sharia	0.551	0.58	0.658	0.323	0.001
Medical Sciences	0.564	0.59	0.668	0.345	0.003
Engineering & Administrative	0.578	0.48	0.662	0.308	0.007
Social & Humanitarian	0.501	0.55	0.631	0.338	0.001

S.C. = Stability Coefficient; R.C. = Regression Coefficient; C.C. = Correlation Coefficient; C.D. = Coefficient of Determination;

S.L. = Significance Level

Discussion

The current study has investigated the relationship between the utilization of social media and the reinforcement of positive social values among university students in the Emirate of Sharjah. Our study has been applied on a randomly selected sample. Based on the "Theory of Social Capital", our research problem has been identified in our attempt to determine the social consequences that result from using social media by university students in the UAE society. Accordingly, the researcher has conducted a field study on a sample of (305) university students in the Emirate of Sharjah. The study has come up with a set of conclusions. They are as follows:

- Intensity of using social media among university students in the Emirate of Sharjah, and Instagram has come first followed by Facebook, then Twitter and Snapchat. This could be attributed to the fact that the Emirati society prefers photo-journalism as well as the availability of high technology. Besides, the rate of using social media by males is much higher than that of females.
- Using social networking sites has become a real supporter to positive social values among university students in Sharjah. Testing the hypotheses has confirmed the existence of high and positive correlational relationship between use of social media and promotion of positive communal values among university students, represented by our research sample on all levels of the study indicators. These indicators are values of cooperation with others, tolerance, loyalty and belonging to Nation, feeling of satisfaction, increase of confidence and trust and communal participation. Our results have come similar to the ones concluded by Al-Sleihat (2018), confirming the essential role of social media in promoting social responsibility. The study hence recommends that university students shall be encourage to use social networks in a beneficial way.
- The indicators that are mostly affected by using Social Media in the Emirati Society, as per the results of our study, are "Cooperation with Others", "Tolerance among University Students", "Loyalty and Belonging to the Homeland", "Feeling of Satisfaction & Self-Promotion", and "Increase of Confidence and Trust". The least percentage has been for the indicator of "Communal Participation".

- Hypotheses testing has shown that the rates of the rates of reinforcing positive social values due to use of social media differ as per the demographic variables, such as gender, age, academic level and scientific specialization. As for gender, males have achieved higher rates than females. In age variable, those who are between (17 -20) have come first. For the academic level, the Bachelor category have come in advance of the other levels. Medical Sciences have been the highest among other scientific specializations in promoting and reinforcing positive social values. These results agree with those concluded by Hollowell (2007) as they confirm that increase in education levels has positive influences on participation leading to political and social interactions.

Recommendations

We do recommend the following:

- We should encourage for exploiting social media in supporting the various processes of teaching and learning at schools and universities due to their positive role in education in general. Therefore, users shall be guided to adopting the most ideal methods of utilizing social media.
- We do advise for conducting further studies and exploring various societies to ensure the role of social media in the reinforcement of positive communal values among young people.

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